Pambu

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THE INSIDE STORY OF THE UNKNOWN TINGWONS

If you look on a reasonably large map of New Guinea, you will see off the western tip of New Hanover a small group of islands that rejoice in the name of Tingwon. If your map is of pre-World War II vintage, the islands may possibly be shown as the Portlands.

The Tingwon or Portland Islands were among the first islands in the South Pacific to be discovered by Europeans. The Dutch explorers Schouten and Le Maire probably sighted them during their voyage round the world in 1616; and their countryman, Tasman, certainly saw them on his voyage to the Pacific in 1642-43.

Yet despite the long European acquaintance with them, the Tingwons are still among the least known islands of the South Seas, even the question of their number still being a matter for dispute.

Captain Philip Carteret, who came upon the Tingwons in HMS _Swallow_ in 1767, and who bestowed the name Portland's Islands upon them, recorded that there were six or seven islands in the group, two of which appeared "tolerably large".

Captain John Hunter, who sailed past the Tingwons in the _Waaksamheyd_ in 1791, stated in his journal that the islands were "nine in number", low and covered with wood. But in a view of the islands which he published in his _An Historical Journal_ in 1793, he reduced the Tingwons to seven.

The present-day _Pacific Islands Pilot_ claims that there are only three Tingwon Islands - Tingwon, Kolenusa and Beligila - and this claim must be treated with respect, for the _Pilot_ speaks knowingly of

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau was established in 1968 as part of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra. Its purpose is to locate unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands and to obtain copies of them on microfilm for four world libraries specialising in Pacific research. The four libraries are the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

a "tall, distinctive tree" on the southern point of Beligila, which, from a distance, "has the appearance of a precipitous rock" and has "often been seen from a distance of 18 miles".

Apart from a paragraph - apparently based on the Pilot - in the wartime handbooks on the Pacific Islands compiled for British Naval Intelligence, further literature on the Tingwon Islands is virtually non-existent.

The current Handbook of Papua and New Guinea ignores their existence altogether; while the Pacific Islands Year Book dismisses them with the observation that they lie to the "west of Lavongai".

In view of the great paucity of printed information on the Tingwons, PAMBU is happy to announce that it can now add considerably to the stock of human knowledge on that subject.

Thanks to a letter written by a one-time resident, PAMBU can reveal - among much else - that the Tingwons number neither nine, seven, six or three, but four. And it can confidently assert that if anyone disputes this fact and wishes to go and count the islands for himself, he will be assured of an eager welcome from an army of mosquitoes.

PAMBU's information is derived from a letter written from the Tingwon Islands in 1935 when the islands were still known, to Europeans at least, as the Portlands. The writer was Mrs C. Phebe Parkinson, one of the earliest European settlers on the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain.

Mrs Parkinson, a sister of the celebrated "Queen Emma", arrived in New Britain in 1881 with her German husband Richard, the author, later on, of the much-quoted book, Dreissig Jahre in der Sudsee.

Besides assisting "Queen Emma" to build her extensive coconut empire on the Gazelle Peninsula, the Parkinsons also acquired

a plantation of their own, Kuradui. After Richard Parkinson was killed in a buggy accident in 1907, Mrs Parkinson continued to work Kuradui; but the estate was confiscated from her after World War I by the Australian Expropriation Board. From then until her death in Japanese-occupied New Ireland in 1944, Mrs Parkinson led a wandering life, staying from time to time with one or another of her 12 children, and occasionally with her grandson, Rudolph Diercke.

It was through Diercke that Mrs Parkinson (then in her seventies) went to live in the Tingwon Islands.

Writing on December 28, 1935, to Mrs R.H. Rickard, an old friend of her Gazelle Peninsula days, Mrs Parkinson gave the following vivid, if unpolished, account of life in the Tingwons. As far as PAMBU can ascertain, this is the only inside story of the Tingwons in all New Guinea literature.

> "My grandson Rudi [Mrs Parkinson wrote] who is managing this plantation is my daughter Nelly's only son. We have been two years in Buka, then he took on this possition and I came to look after him, there are four Islands on this property and are 25 miles away from the Mainland of New Hanover, we are on the Kaewieng district, all our mail goes there, we have no neighbours we see no one untill a boat calls to take of Copra at every two months there are over 30 natives on a reserve on one end of this the biggest Island, they live on Tapiocca, Bananas and Sacksack (Sago palms that grows in the swamp) these are all sandy Islands nothing else can grow here, a hughe swamp in the middle which breeds millions of musquitos I tried to grow vegetables but nothing came up on account of sandy soil, we do miss same also Taro and Kaukau's, the Cutter goes now and then to Kaewieng for any supplies needed and to get our mail, if good weather she'd be back in a week if not then it takes longer she calls in the mainland for little Taro on her way back, there are no wild pigeons on the Islands but plenty of nice fish which we live mostly on also seashells such as Clamshell and so....makes nice soup. Ducks do well here but fowls dies and hardly lay eggs, it is a pity as one can do with eggs in the kitchen, I like being here and dont mind the loneliness but it is bad with millions of sandflies and musquitos Anophelis too, both in the house and out doors, worse on the plantation and I do feel sorry for the poor labourers they work with one hand and keeping the pest off with a branch of bush with the other this is the only draw back here, all the labourers have each a musquito net and healthy in spite of the musquitos. At Xmas our only pleasure was when Rudi

> gave the labourers their Xmas feast and sports with prices they did enjoy it and so did we, we had a very quiet dinner with the musquitos and sandflies to keep us alive I have never seen any thing like it in my life, the musquitos are not so bad in the South East season, but just now the North W. have set in they are bad still there is hardly any fever amongst the boys, we take quinine nearly every day to be free of fever, yes, God is good to me, I have always good health and contended to be with one of my children out here, have not much interest in the outside world only I am always happy to hear from some of my dear children and my good old friends who still remembers me...."

Mrs Parkinson's letter from the Tingwons is one of several unpublished documents which Miss Netta M. Rickard, of Artarmon, New South Wales, has recently lent to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for copying.

Miss Rickard is the daughter of the Rev. R.H. Rickard (1858-1939), a pioneer missionary in New Britain, who published the first New Britain dictionary and grammar in 1889.

The other papers in Miss Rickard's collection comprise:

- A copy of a letter dated May 1, 1882, from her father to the Wesleyan Church offering his services as a missionary in New Britain.
- A fragment of a diary kept by her mother in the Duke of York Islands from May 19, 1883, to September 24, 1883.
- Three letters from Mrs C. Phebe Parkinson to Miss Rickard's mother, written between 1898 and 1939 from various places in the New Guinea Islands.

A CURIOSITY OF PACIFIC LITERATURE

A day-by-day diary that was kept by a Tahitian workman on Flint Island in the Eastern Pacific in 1889-1891 easily takes the palm so far as the most curious Pacific manuscript to be acquired by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.

The diary was kept by one, H.I.N. Moouga, and is in the Tahitian language.

Flint Island, like Malden and Starbuck mentioned in the following article, is one of the Line Islands. At the time the diary was kept, Flint was being worked for its guano by J.T. Arundel & Co., of London.

Because of the scarcity of literature of any kind in the Tahitian language of the late 19th century, the diary will be of great value to Pacific linguists interested in tracing the development of that language from the "classical" period of the early missionaries down to the present day.

Translated, it should also be of value to historians studying the early days of the phosphate industry in the Pacific - a subject on which little first-hand information has yet found its way into Pacific research libraries.

Moouga's diary was lent to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for copying by Mr H.E. Maude, of the Department of Pacific History at the Australian National University. The diary was given to Mr Maude some years ago by the daughter of J.T. Arundel.

THE ADVENTURES OF RICHARD BRANSCOMBE CHAVE

One of the most intriguing documents to come into the hands of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau in recent weeks is an autobiographical account of 208 foolscap pages describing some extraordinary adventures in the Eastern Pacific of one, Richard Branscombe Chave.

The adventures took place in 1871, when Chave, then 22, was manager of the guano diggings at Starbuck Island.

Starbuck is one of half a dozen widely scattered and isolated specks of land to the north-east of Tahiti, known collectively as the Line Islands.

In 1871, Starbuck was under lease from the British Government to Houlder Bros., of London; and this firm, with a team of three Europeans and 50 Rarotongans, headed by Chave, had been working the island for its guano for several months.

About the middle of February, 1871, provisions on the island began to run low, and as there was no sign of a brig which was to bring replenishments, Chave began to think that an accident had befallen her, and to feel anxious for the 52 men under his care.

In the circumstances, he decided to fit out a large boat and to make for Malden Island, another guano island 120 miles NNE, which was being worked by Messrs. Grice, Sumner & Co., of Melbourne.

The boat was "long and sharp at both ends with a good beam", being a cross between a whale boat and a jolly boat. However, Chave did not have sufficient light material to make a whole suit of sails for her, so he made some out of half-worn guano bags, which he described as "not quite so light as duck".

Having chosen three of his best Rarotongan workmen to go with him, Chave set off for Malden at noon on February 26, with a favourable wind behind him.

As he had no chronometer and no means of gauging the rate of the current, his estimates of where he was once he had lost sight of land were approximate, to say the least.

After being out about four days, Chave calculated that he and his crew were about 40 miles east of Malden Island.

He accordingly ran to the westward until he had made good that distance, but seeing nothing of the expected haven, he continued on in the same direction.

When there was still no land in sight after about six more hours, Chave felt sure that he had overshot Malden Island and decided to work back to Starbuck.

Everything went well for several days, until one of the Rarotongans fell asleep at the tiller, the boat capsized, and much valuable equipment and all the food and water was lost. Five hours passed before the boat could be righted again, after which Chave decided that he could no longer expect to get back to Starbuck and should make for Penrhyn Island in the Northern Cooks.

The Rarotongans were none too happy about their situation by this time. But Chave, ever a cheerful optimist, felt certain he would fetch land in a day or two.

"Some of my readers", he wrote, "may perhaps think that, being as I was about 300 miles from land with no compass to guide my path, nothing to eat and nothing to drink, in company with three natives who looked ready to eat me, and whose countenance was enough to turn a pan of milk sour was no enviable situation, [but] I must confess that it was not...."

Chave's optimism on this occasion was vindicated, for three days after the capsize, Penrhyn Island came in sight to the

southward, and within a few hours, Chave and his companions were safely on land.

Chave, who had been ill with dysentery for six weeks before leaving Starbuck, was so weak on getting ashore that he could only stagger about like a drunken man.

However, he quickly recovered; and within a few days he had a visit from the island's only European resident, a trader called George, who ran a store and collected pearl shell for Captain Brothers, of Tahiti.

Chave went to stay with George, being taken to his home on the other side of the island in a fine schooner that Captain Brothers had built at Caroline Island, another guano island in the Line Group.

A few days later, a square-rigged vessel hove in sight, which was thought at first to be Captain Brothers' ship coming to collect a supply of pearl shell. But the ship proved to be the Susanna Booth, of Sydney, under the command of a Captain Clulow, and with H.B. Sterndale (one of the most ubiquitous characters in the Pacific at that time) as supercargo.

Chave saw quite a lot of Sterndale, who always seemed to have some new tale to tell him about the islanders and missionaries whenever they met.

One of the stories that Sterndale told Chave concerned uninhabited Suwarrow, an atoll several hundred miles to the south-west of Penrhyn.

This island was later to figure largely in Chave's life, for after he had recruited his strength on Penrhyn and had borrowed a compass from George, and had bought some other equipment from Sterndale, Chave set off with an islander called Barney to attempt to sail back to Starbuck. However, as had happened previously, Chave soon lost all real notion of where he was, and he and his companion finally drifted to Suwarrow.

Suwarrow, be it noted, is in precisely the opposite direction to Starbuck, and it took the two men three or four hungry and thirsty weeks to get there.

At the time of their arrival, they did not know the name of their landfall; and as they thought it would be thickly inhabited, they felt no great concern when their boat was stove in on the reef.

The story of the Robinson Crusoe-style life that Chave and Barney subsequently led on Suwarrow fills more than 120 vivid pages of Chave's narrative.

Unfortunately, the narrative is not complete - it breaks off at a point when the castaways had been on the atoll for about nine months - and the reader is left wondering how the pair fared from then on, and in what circumstances they were finally rescued and taken back to civilisation.

However, Chave does anticipate himself a couple of times, and this enables one to know that:

1. Two years passed before the castaways were rescued by a ship from Pago Pago.

2. Following their return to civilisation, news of their adventures was published in a New Zealand paper, and this prompted Chave's old friend Sterndale to write in recalling his meeting with Chave at Penrhyn and airing his knowledge about Suwarrow.

Elsewhere in his narrative, Chave speaks of having run away to sea at the age of 13, of having returned to England, and of writing the narrative in the safety of his cabin "while my vessel, under the influence of a steady, fair wind, is gliding safely on her course".

It may thus be concluded that Chave was an Englishman; that his regular profession was the sea; and that after his adventures in the Eastern Pacific, he returned to his profession and became master of a ship.

It is clear from frequent references to "my readers" in his narrative that he intended the narrative for publication; but there is no certain clue as to whether the narrative was ever finished, and, if so, what became of the missing part of it.

A pencilled note on the last page, in the hand of J.L. Young, a prominent trader in the Pacific in the days of Louis Becke, states: "The remainder of the manuscript was missing when Chave's daughter gave it to me to have copied in 1897".

The narrative of Richard Branscombe Chave thus has a couple of key features in common with Charles Dickens' Mystery of Edwin Drood - it is both incomplete and mysterious.

There is also another thing about it that Dickens, himself, would have liked. It was found in an old trunk, whose contents had not been disturbed for a long time, by Mr Walter L. Young, of St. Ives, New South Wales, who passed it on to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.

Mr Young is the son of the late J.L. Young, mentioned above, whose own fascinating papers (which were also in the trunk) will be dealt with at length in the next issue of PAMBU.

MEKEO MADE EASIER

Anyone who is currently toying with the idea of learning or improving his knowledge of the Mekeo language of Papua will be interested to know that the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has now added a Mekeo dictionary to its library of manuscript material on microfilm.

The dictionary - Mekeo-French - is the work of Father Gustave Desnoes, M.S.C., a Frenchman, who served as a missionary in Papua from 1906 to 1927. The dictionary was completed in 1938.

The P.M.B. obtained microfilm copies of the dictionary through the courtesy of Dr H. Bluhme, of the Department of Linguistics at the Australian National University.

WHAT THEODORUS SAW IN HAWAII IN 1875

If Theodorus Bailey Myers Mason suffered any sort of complex as he went through life with the names he had, he managed to give no hint of it in an account of his career that he put together some time after his 27th birthday.

Theodorus, who was born in New York City in 1848, entered the US Naval Academy at the age of 16, and after leading a gay social life for eight years, he passed the examination for lieutenant.

In September, 1872, he sailed from Philadelphia in the USS *Omaha* on a cruise to the Pacific. In the following February, in Valparaiso, he transferred to the USS *Pensacola*, a surveying vessel, and in that ship he visited other South American ports and arrived in Hawaii on February 13, 1875.

After seven months in Hawaiian waters, Theodorus returned to the United States, where, in the fullness of time, he put together what he called a private journal - this being a brief outline of his career up to his joining the USS *Omaha*, followed by a day-by-day account of his voyage to the Pacific.

The so-called private journal is now in the library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, whence the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau recently obtained microfilm copies for its three other member libraries.

Historians interested in the story of Hawaii's growth to U.S. statehood will be interested to read what Lieutenant Theodorus Bailey Myers Mason did and saw there in 1875.

HOW NAURU BECAME A GERMAN PROTECTORATE

Twenty-four hours after the Germans officially raised the flag on Nauru in October, 1888, the Nauruans (who then numbered fewer than 1,000 people, and who had long been fighting each other) had handed in 765 items of firearms, comprising one revolver, 109 pistols and 655 rifles, including 171 of the breach-loading variety.

These extraordinary statistics are contained in an official report on the German flag-raising ceremony, written by the man in charge of the operation, Herr Sonnenschein, German Imperial Commissioner in the Marshall Islands.

Sonnenschein's report is one of several dozen unpublished documents on Nauru in the German Central Archives in Potsdam.

Microfilm copies of these documents are now being distributed to the member libraries of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.

In his report on the flag-raising, Sonnenschein said that he sailed from Jaluit for the annexation ceremony in the German gunboat _Eber_ and arrived at Nauru on October 1, 1888.

After landing with Lieut. Emsmann, of the German Navy, and 36 men, Sonnenschein marched to the trading station of a German trader called Rasch, whose station was owned by the Jaluit Gesellschaft.

Having deposited their luggage and provisions, Sonnenschein & Co. set off to march round the island to invite all the white settlers and the resident native missionary to be present at Rasch's station next morning for the flag-raising ceremony.

Similarly, all the Nauruan chiefs, who numbered 12, were "persuaded in a kindly way" to go to Rasch's station forthwith.

After returning from their march, which took five hours, the Germans feasted the Nauruan chiefs and treated them with great friendliness. But apparently for fear that the chiefs might skip the flag-raising ceremony, the Germans "took them prisoner for the night and kept them under guard in a copra shed".

Next morning, in the presence of all 10 Europeans, the captive chiefs, the missionary and a big crowd of Nauruans, Sonnenschein read a proclamation declaring Nauru to be a protectorate of the German Reich, and the flag was raised "with the usual military honours". Sonnenschein then explained to the chiefs the meaning of the proclamation and the changed conditions due to the annexation, and stressed particularly that any disturbance of the peace was prohibited.

Next he asked them why, in the past, they had always started fighting again after they had promised the commanders of British and German warships that they would keep the peace. When the Nauruans replied that it was because they got drunk on toddy, and the great number of firearms on the island, Sonnenschein said that he wanted to help them in the latter respect and that they must therefore hand in all their arms and ammunition within 24 hours. The chiefs of those clans which did not comply with this order, he said, would be taken as prisoners to Jaluit.

The Nauruans thereupon dispersed to collect their weapons, and by the following night 765 items had been handed in, together with 1,000 bullets.

However, Sonnenschein was by no means certain that all firearms had been collected. "The future must tell if the disarming was complete", he wrote.

Sonnenschein's report, written in Jaluit on October 31, 1888, is the "piece de resistance" among the documents on Nauru in the Potsdam Archives. The documents cover the period, 1887-1916.

Dr Helen Hughes, of the Department of Economics in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, arranged to have the documents microfilmed in 1966. Her mother, Mrs E. Gintz, subsequently translated them into English; and Dr Hughes has since passed both the microfilm and the translations of the documents on to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.

The P.M.B. is distributing microfilm copies of the original documents to its member libraries immediately. Later, after Mrs Gintz's translations have been checked, a microfilm will be made for distribution of the English version of the documents. Technical details of the Nauru microfilm and the others mentioned in this newsletter will be published in the next issue of PAMBU.